

HACKENSACK, N.J.  
RECORD

E. 124,391

JAN 23 1965

## BOOKS AND AUTHORS

BY JOHN BARKHAM

THIS, I REFLECTED, would be one interview in which I would be able to tell the author something about himself he didn't know. It was a meeting both of us had anticipated—I because I had been one of the judges of the Harper Prize Novel Contest who had selected his book, "P. S. Wilkinson", as winner, and the author, C. D. B. Bryan, because he would be hearing from one of the judges why his book had been chosen.

C. D. B. (for Courtlandt Dixon Barnes) Bryan looks every inch the stylish writer he is — a tall, slender, spectacled, good-looking man with delicate features and blondish hair brushed neatly back from his forehead. He had, I later learned, a passion for neatness visible in his appearance, right down to his side-vent double-breasted suit of the kind now coming back into vogue. He smiles easily and converses with poise and charm.

I explained to him that the judges in the contest had not known the titles or authors of the manuscripts they considered, and that I had read his book last but had unhesitatingly placed it first. The story had impressed me as being largely autobiographical. Was this, in fact, the case?

He nodded. "Yes, it was. It opens in Korea. I spent 2 years there after leaving Yale. It moves to Washington, where Wilkinson takes a lie detector test for the C. I. A. I took such a test."

He must have observed my look of puzzlement. "Yes, I know how it sounds, but when I got out of uniform I didn't know what I wanted to do. I knew I wanted to be a writer, but I'd had no writing experience. I was 25 then, and I felt I ought to do something worthwhile—something of the kind President Kennedy inspired among young people at the time.

"So I went to the C. I. A. in Washington and told them in effect: 'I don't really want to work for you, but I've had this training in Korea and, if it's any use to you, I'm available.' Their psychiatrists kept asking me why I was offering the C. I. A. my services when I didn't really want to work for them, and finally flunked me out."

Here I interpolated that in my judge's re-

port I had likened his dialogue to that of John O'Hara, only to learn later, to my surprise, that O'Hara was in fact his stepfather.

Bryan laughed. "Yes, he's been my stepfather for the past ten years and takes a great interest in my writing. He won't help me with it and he doesn't want to read any of it until it's published, but he did introduce me to his editor at the New Yorker and they bought three of my stories. It was the New Yorker editor, in fact, who urged me to try a novel."

How had O'Hara reacted to his winning the Harper Prize and to the subsequent selection of "P. S. Wilkinson" by the Literary Guild?—He was genuinely excited by it—and also a mite relieved that his judgment that 'the kid could write' had been borne out."

Bryan's conversation is as cool and elegant as his dress and manner. His writing methods are of a piece. He lives in Tuxedo Park, N. Y., with his wife and two young children and once a week comes into New York City to work at "Monocle", a satiric magazine. At home he writes in a study recently done over on the proceeds of his jackpot.

"I never write without a tie on—if you know what I mean," he remarked with a grin. "It's a psychological gimmick, of course, as though I were saying to myself 'If you look neat, you'll write neatly.' I use the Hemingway method of stopping each day when I can see round the corner, and it works for me. When I get stuck I call it off and build model planes. No, I'm not putting one on—I really mean it. There's so much tension in writing that I find the gluing together of those little sticks is the one certain method of dissipating the evil humors, the black moods."

With the success of his first novel assured, Bryan is now toying with an idea for his next. One of these days he will seat himself in his new chair in his newly-furbished study, surrounded by his new bookshelves, and, with his tie on, begin writing his new book. "I'm hoping it won't be too long before one of my characters starts talking back at me," he said. "I'll never forget the day Wilkinson made an unexpected crack at me in the first book. It gave me the greatest feeling in the world."